

§511.76 Qualifications and standards of conduct.

(a) The NHTSA expects all persons appearing in proceedings before it to act with integrity, with respect, and in an ethical manner. Business transacted before and with the NHTSA shall be in good faith.

(b) To maintain orderly proceedings, the Presiding Officer or the Administrator, as appropriate under this part, may exclude parties, participants, and their representatives for refusal to comply with directions, continued use of dilatory tactics, refusal to adhere to reasonable standards of orderly and ethical conduct, failure to act in good faith, or violation of the prohibition against certain *ex parte* communications. The Presiding Officer may, in addition to the above sanctions, deny access to additional *in camera* materials when a party or participant publicly releases such materials without authorization.

(c) An excluded party, participant, or representative thereof may petition the Administrator to entertain an interlocutory appeal in accordance with §511.24. If, after such appeal, the representative of a party or participant, is excluded, the hearing shall, at the request of the party or participant, be suspended for a reasonable time so that the party or participant may obtain another representative.

§511.77 Restrictions as to former members and employees.

The postemployee restrictions applicable to former Administrators and NHTSA employees, as set forth in 18 U.S.C. 207, shall govern the activities of former Administrators and NHTSA employees in matters connected with their former duties and responsibilities.

§511.78 Prohibited communications.

(a) *Applicability.* This section is applicable during the period commencing with the date of issuance of a complaint and ending upon final NHTSA action in the matter.

(b) *Definitions.* (1) “Decision-maker” means those NHTSA personnel who render decisions in adjudicative proceedings under this part, or who advise

officials who render such decisions, including:

- (i) The Administrator,
- (ii) The Administrative Law Judges;
- (2) “*Ex parte* communication”

means:

(i) Any written communication other than a request for a status report on the proceeding made to a decisionmaker by any person other than a decisionmaker which is not served on all parties,

(ii) Any oral communication other than a request for a status report on the proceeding made to a decisionmaker by any person other than a decisionmaker without advance notice to the parties to the proceeding and opportunity for them to be present.

(c) *Prohibited ex parte communications.* Any oral or written *ex parte* communication relative to the merits of a proceeding under this part is a prohibited *ex parte* communication, except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section.

(d) *Permissible ex parte communications.* The following communications shall not be prohibited under this section:

(1) *Ex parte* communications authorized by statute or by this part.

(2) Any staff communication concerning judicial review or judicial enforcement in any matter pending before or decided by the Administrator.

(e) *Procedures for handling prohibited ex parte communication.* (1) Prohibited written *ex parte* communication. To the extent possible, a prohibited written *ex parte* communication received by any NHTSA employee shall be forwarded to the Docket Section rather than to a decisionmaker. A prohibited written *ex parte* communication which reaches a decisionmaker shall be forwarded by the decisionmaker to the Docket Section. If the circumstances in which a prohibited *ex parte* written communication was made are not apparent from the communication itself, a statement describing those circumstances shall be forwarded with the communication.

(2) Prohibited oral *ex parte* communication. (i) If a prohibited oral *ex parte* communication is made to a decisionmaker, he or she shall advise the person making the communication that the communication is prohibited and shall terminate the discussion.